LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

C707: Start of the Hunt

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"Zhang shi, don't forget our bet. Whoever who obtains the most points will be the victor!"

Seeing the crowd rush up the mountain, Brother Yu turned to Zhang Xuan and sneered before rushing up the mountain alongside Senior Feng.

Seeing the crowd rush along, Zhang Xuan glanced at Luo Xuan, Ruohuan gongzi, and the others and said, "Let's head on up as well!"

Only the examinees were allowed to be on the examination field, so the escorting members such as Hong shi weren't allowed to enter. They had to watch from outside the area. Thus, the examinees could only depend on themselves.

"Un!"

Luo Xuan and the others nodded.

"Let's head in that direction!"

Knowing that he was the leader of the group, Zhang Xuan scanned the surroundings, and his gaze eventually fell on a narrow valley. Pointing in that direction, he took the lead.

The other master teachers form Huanyu Empire followed closely behind.

Leiyuan Peak was actually relatively large in size. Putting aside the sharp cliffs, there was actually a lot of space to maneuver around. It was filled with innumerable gorges, boulders, and trees… Even an army of thirty thousand seemed insignificant against the entire peak.

The route which Zhang Xuan had chosen was one with very few people.

Even the weakest of the group was at Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle, so the group traveled at an extremely fast speed. In just ten mere minutes, they were already deep within the mountain forest.

Perhaps it was due to the lush greenery filtering out the rays of the sun, but cold air seemed to permeate the entire mountain.

In the tranquil forest, there wasn't the slightest sound to be heard. Perhaps it was due to the earlier group driving away the beasts and birds, or perhaps the spirit beasts had gone into hiding knowing that master teachers were marching up the mountain to eliminate them, but the entire place seemed to be devoid of life.

"Zhang shi, where do we go now?"

By now, the group had been traveling for quite some time already. However, putting aside seeing a whole spirit beast, they hadn't even seen a single strand of spirit beast hair yet.

As such, Luo Xuan and the others couldn't help but panic.

"Given the vast size of Leiyuan Peak, if the spirit beasts are intentionally hiding from us, it won't be easy to find them. However, there's no need to worry. I have been looking out for the tracks of the spirit beasts, and I have already noticed something…"

Zhang Xuan smiled.

Putting aside his identity as a master teacher, he was also a capable beast tamer who was proficient in the Ancient Beast Language. Not to mention, his Eye of Insight also allowed him to easily spot the slightest trails left behind by spirit beasts.

If Zhang Xuan were to seek them out seriously, it would be impossible for the spirit beasts to hide from him.

After advancing for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to an abrupt halt. He indicated for the group to remain silent, and with a flick of his wrist, he took out a sword.

Huala!

With a swift movement, a sharp, cold gleam flashed across the steep cliff before him.

Just as the group was bewildered as to what Zhang Xuan was attempting to do, a deafening explosion suddenly sounded, and the boulder before them shattered. Following which, a gray figure suddenly dashed out.

Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast… Gale Wolf!

To think that this fellow would actually be hiding inside a boulder.

"I'll hand it over to you all. I'll check out the situation in front!"

Knowing that Luo Xuan and the others shouldn't have any problems with a spirit beast of this tier, Zhang Xuan chose to proceed ahead to scout around first.

The route ahead was tilted upward. Even though the route rather steep, it was fortunate that there were many plants around to serve as a stepping stone. Soon, Zhang Xuan had already covered a distance of seven to eight kilometers.

Hu!

Suddenly, Zhang Xuan came to a halt, and a deep frown appeared on his forehead.

"These marks indicate that a group of spirit beasts have passed through this area…"

Even though there were no clear marks on the field before him, Zhang Xuan was still able to easily tell that a group of beasts had just passed the area not too long ago through his Eye of Insight.

"Bluebacked Ferocious Bear, Steelfang Panther, Southern Yellow Tiger, Metal-arm Ape… Those are spirit beasts that specialize in speed! Furthermore, all of them have reached Consonant Spirit realm!" Zhang Xuan deduced, after a moment of observation.

Different spirit beasts would leave behind different trails. Of the beast horde that had passed through this area, he was able to identify at least a dozen of them.

These spirit beasts were usually the nemeses of one another, and yet they were actually traveling together. Most probably, just as Elder Mo had said, they had begun working together to stand against the humans.

"Zhang shi…"

Just as Zhang Xuan was trying to figure out the direction in which the spirit beasts were heading, Luo Xuan and the others finally caught up with him.

To them, a Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle spirit beast didn't pose as a challenge at all. They were able to kill it swiftly.

However, their group was simply too big. Killing a Clarifying Turbidity realm spirit beast didn't do much to help them as a group.

"Everyone, lower your voices. Let's go for a big one!"

Zhang Xuan smiled mysteriously.

More than a dozen Transcendent Mortal 5-dan spirit beast had passed through this area. This was an opportunity as much as a threat.

If they could get rid of all of them, they would gain sufficient points to pass the examination.

If it was any other team or alliance, they would surely avoid clashing with such a large group. However, Zhang Xuan was different. His cultivation had reached Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle, and his fighting prowess far exceeded his peers. If he wished to, he could easily destroy the entire group of spirit beasts.

"Go for a big one?"

Having only just arrived, everyone in the group was unable to comprehend what Zhang Xuan was getting at.

"Un. Based on my observation, a group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts have just passed through the area. As long as we can slaughter them, we should be able to gain sufficient points for all of us to clear…" Zhang Xuan chuckled.

"Consonant Spirit realm spirit beast?"

Everyone's eyes immediately beamed with excitement.

A single Consonant Spirit realm primary stage spirit beast was worth ten points, so they only had to clear away five of those to earn sufficient points for all of them to clear the examination.

As for the danger involved, didn't Zhang shi have a half 9-dan tamed beast? If put in a critical situation, he could simply summon the Great Violetwing Beast to save them…

"Follow me!"

Having come to a decision, Zhang Xuan immediately led the group down the trail the spirit beast horde had gone through.

A moment later, he suddenly stopped.

"Something is wrong…"

Ruohuan gongzi walked up and asked, "What's wrong?"

"There are signs of a formation being set up just ahead, but there are no signs of battle at all…"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

"What does that mean?" The group seemed unable to follow what Zhang Xuan was saying.

"If there are signs of a formation being set up, it can only mean that… someone has prepared an ambush ahead! However, if there are no signs of battle, it can only mean that the spirit beasts noticed the trap and avoided it," Zhang Xuan explained.

"Spirit beasts possess an innate sensitivity to the disturbances in the spiritual energy in their environment. They might have sensed the presence of the formation in advance and avoided it," Luo Xuan interjected.

Spirit beasts possessed far sharper senses than humans. It shouldn't be anything much for them to notice and avoid a formation!

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

It wasn't as simple as Luo Xuan had said.

"This is a grade-5 Greencloud Illusion Formation. This formation is known for its inconspicuousness when inactive. Even a Consonant Spirit realm master teacher would find it hard to notice this formation even when passing through this area…"

Even though the other party had already removed the formation, with his eye of discernment, he was still able to tell what kind of formation it was.

The Greenmist Formation was known for its ability to conceal itself, and without the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan would've found it hard to notice it as well, needless to say a group of spirit beasts!

He didn't believe that a group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts would possess a sharper eye of discernment than him.

"What is going on?"

Hearing that it was the Greenmist Formation, everyone immediately realized the bizarreness of the matter, and a deep frown appeared on their foreheads.

"I don't know either… But in any case, let's proceed forward to see what they are up to."

Zhang Xuan wasn't able to understand what was going on, but considering that the spirit beasts hadn't left too long ago as judged from the fresh trails, he was certain he'd be able to figure out what was going on by following them.

"Alright!"

The others nodded and followed behind.

Just like that, the group proceeded on for another ten minutes before Zhang Xuan stopped once again.

Seeing the perplexed expression on Zhang Xuan's face, Ruohuan gongzi walked up and asked, "What is it?"

Taking in the faint scent lingering in the air, Zhang Xuan said, "Someone tried to use a 'Crimson Blood Pill' as a bait for the spirit beasts earlier on, but… the spirit beasts ignored the bait completely…"

"Crimson Blood Pill?"

"Yes, it's a grade-5 pill. Logically speaking, it should be irresistible to the Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts…" The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more bewildered he became.

Zhang Xuan wouldn't have been surprised if the spirit beasts could hold themselves back from any other bait, but this was the Crimson Blood Pill! Once consumed, it could induce a Bloodline Evolution in them. This was a rare opportunity for them to further raise their cultivation, and yet they still managed to hold themselves back. This was extremely unlikely.

Spirit beasts possessed intellect, but they were still primarily governed by their primal instincts. If they were capable of accurately discerning and avoiding traps, the number of tamed beasts in the world would surely be several times lower than it currently was.

It might be a coincidence that the spirit beasts managed to avoid the formation, but it would be going too far to call this a coincidence as well. There was something truly suspicious about this situation.

"What is even more doubtful is that the master teachers who set up the formation and prepared the Crimson Blood Pill bait are missing too!" Zhang Xuan continued.

Luo Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

"Missing? Could it be that… they have been killed?"

If the spirit beasts were strong enough to slaughter groups who were in possession of a grade-5 pinnacle formation and pill, the Huanyu Empire group would likely be unable to do any better against them either.

"That's not it. If a battle had occurred, traces would surely have been left behind. Putting aside a group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts, even if there were Transcendent Mortal 9-dan spirit beasts here, it would still be difficult for them to slaughter an entire team of master teachers without leaving behind any traces!"

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

All of the examinees taking the examination were elites among the master teachers. Given their talents, their homelands would surely have been more than willing to provide them with the best of resources to groom them. Naturally, they would definitely have some life preservation means on them too.

With their life preservation means, even if the group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts had ambushed them, they should still have been able to escape without any trouble.

"This..." Everyone was starting to feel unsettled by the bizarre situation before them.

"If I am not mistaken, they must have noticed the spirit beasts and are tracking them at the moment..." Zhang Xuan revealed his deductions.

"Tracking them?"

"Un, this is the only logical explanation. Otherwise, there is no reason why the formation we saw earlier would be dismantled so cleanly, and there are no marks of battle around," Zhang Xuan rationalized.

Ruohuan gongzi suddenly realized the incongruity in the entire story.

"That doesn't make any sense. If the spirit beasts did notice the traps in advance and steered clear of them, they definitely would have left quietly so as to avoid alarming the master teachers. Furthermore, given that they were aware of the presence of master teachers in the area, how could they remain unaware if a group were to follow them?"

"That is precisely what that left me baffled!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Once the spirit beasts noticed the formations, for their own safety, they would surely leave silently so as to avoid alarming the master teachers.

It was already surprising that one group would actually notice them, but now there were two… It was as if the spirit beasts were intentionally revealing their tracks so that the

master teachers could find them.

The entire situation reeked of a scheme.

"We should continue following them to take a look..."

Knowing that they wouldn't find an answer by standing around, Zhang Xuan looked around and continued following the trail of the spirit beasts.

The others also followed behind.

In the next hour, the group circled a large round along the peak, and they noticed quite a few ambushes as well. From time to time, there were traces of battle too.

However, judging from the marks, it seemed that the spirit beasts had retreated immediately after encountering the master teachers. With their superior agility, they were able to get away easily as well.

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